

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/087,913
Response filed May 17, 2005
Reply to OA dated December 17, 2004

REMARKS

Claims 1 - 9, 18 - 26 and 28 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 10 - 17 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Claim 27 has been amended in order to more particularly point out, and distinctly claim the subject matter to which the applicants regard as their invention. The applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been added. It is believed that this Amendment is fully responsive to the Office Action dated December 17, 2004.

The applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claim 28 contains allowable claimed subject matter for the reasons set forth in lines 5 - 7, page 5 of the outstanding Action. Moreover, the applicants thank the Examiner for withdrawing his previous reliance on Wrezel (U.S. Patent No. 5,674,326) and Yamaguchi (U.S. Patent No. 5,962,133).

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However, the Examiner now relies on two (2) new references (namely, Japanese Patent Publication No. 61-195941 and Japanese Patent Publication No. 5-96396) in setting forth the following rejections:

1) claims 21 - 26 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) or under 35 USC §103(a) based on Japanese Patent Publication No. 61-195941 (hereinafter referred to as "JP '941"); and

2) claims 21 - 27 and 29 - 34 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) or under 35 USC §103(a) based on Japanese Patent Publication No. 5-96396 (hereinafter referred to as "JP '396").

The applicants respectfully request reconsideration of these rejections.

In order to expedite the processing of this patent application to issuance, the applicants have canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, claims 21 - 26. Thus, the outstanding rejections of these claims are now moot.

As to the remaining claims 27 - 34, the applicants have amended independent claim 27 in order to incorporate therein the allowable subject matter set forth in claim 28; and have thereafter canceled claim 28. Thus, independent claim 27 should now be similarly allowable. Claims 29 - 34 remain dependent on independent claim 27. Accordingly, claims 29 - 34 should now be similarly allowable.

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In view of the above, the withdrawal of the outstanding rejections under 35 USC §102(b) or under 35 USC §103(a) based on Japanese Patent Publication No. 61-195941, and the outstanding rejections under 35 USC §102(b) or under 35 USC §103(a) based on Japanese Patent Publication No. 5-96396 is in order, and is therefore respectfully solicited.

In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claims, as amended, are in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is requested.

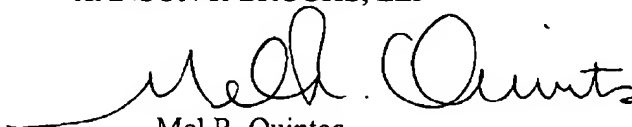
If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

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In the event that this paper is not timely filed, the applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

ARMSTRONG, KRATZ, QUINTOS,
HANSON & BROOKS, LLP



Mel R. Quintos
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 31,898

MRQ/lrj/ipc

Atty. Docket No. 020263
Suite 1000
1725 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-2930



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